

vocal and active participants in planning. Our results suggest that this group may share some concerns with other members of the public (for example, about safety or environmental protection), but may be more sensitive to other impacts such as trespass or vandalism. Because of this, they may be reluctant to accept new recreational developments. Studies that approach only the recreating public may fail to capture the views of other stakeholders affected by management decisions and policies.

"Studies that approach only the recreating public may fail to capture the views of other stakeholders affected by management decisions and policies."

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About the Authors

At the time of this research, **Michelle Adcock** was a graduate student, and **Troy Hall** was an Assistant Professor, in the Department of Forestry at Virginia Tech. Dr. Adcock is now the Associate Extension Agent with 4-H for the Craig County Extension Office in New Castle, Virginia. She can be reached at 540-864-5812 or aadcock@vt.edu. Troy Hall is now an Assistant Professor in the Department of Resource Recreation and Tourism in the College of Forest Resources at the University of Idaho. She can be reached at 208-885-9455 or troyh@uidaho.edu.



Study findings assist park management planning

By Mary Vavra

The planning committee for Great Egg Harbor National Scenic and Recreational River incorporated information and recommendations resulting from the 1998 Virginia Tech social science study into the May 2000 final Comprehensive Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement. This fundamental planning tool defines the purposes of resource protection and outlines preferred experiences for living within and visiting the river corridor. The Great Egg Harbor River is managed by the National Park Service in cooperation with the State of New Jersey, four counties, and 12 municipalities.

The social science study compiled information about river users, which gave the National Park Service a profile of park visitors and an understanding that most live within 20 miles of the river corridor. The Great Egg Harbor River is clearly a close-to-home recreational resource. Recognizing that the river was already overcrowded in 1998 and is close to major urban centers, the National Park Service recommended limiting additional public access. Moreover, information gathered from the surveys showed support for increased law enforcement on both the tidal and nontidal sections of the river.

The information gathered through the study also supports limiting the size and design of docks which continues to be a major concern in the tidal section of the river. The National Park Service used the information to work with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to develop state regulations regarding dock designs to ensure that structures do not adversely affect the river's outstandingly remarkable resource values.

About the author

Mary Vavra is a Planner with the Philadelphia Support Office of the National Park Service. She can be reached at 215-597-9175 and mary_vavra@nps.gov.



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There is a concern that development pressures may adversely affect this scenic section of the Great Egg Harbor River.

